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# Tammany Hall

By

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# Half Moon Series

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## TAMMANY HALL.

By TALCOTT WILLIAMS, LL.D., L.H.D.

Voters on Manhattan Island

TAMMANY, for nearly a century, has constituted the political agency by which the major mass of the voters of New York City has made effective its preferences in regard to the rule of the city for good or for ill to the worst harvest yet reaped in the wide field of universal suffrage. This ruling organization of adult male voters has sometimes been for years together only a plurality of the voters of the city profiting by the divisions of its opponents, and it has sometimes itself divided by fission, a part preferring to use one of the many agencies organized in imitation of Tammany ; but for seventy years there has never been a time at any election when it was not perfectly clear to every unprejudiced observer that a clear plurality of the voters resident on Manhattan Island, preferred, other things being equal, to re-elect rulers whose primary selection had been determined by this political agency.

The Fortunes of Europe

It has been associated with the most gigantic spoliation of a civilized city known under manhood suffrage, though the aggregate of its levies has been small by the side of the gigantic fine inflicted on Paris and France by the military despotism, which ruled both with the applause and approval of liberal England and despotic Europe, from the *coup d'état* to Sedan. Until the close of the last century, it was expected in Europe, as it is still expected in all Oriental countries, that those who governed a nation or conducted the higher and more important duties of its religion would enrich themselves in the process. The princely palaces of Rome record the splendid, sumptuous and successful application of this principle to the fruits of the faith of Christendom. So the "great families" of Europe, their homes, their fortunes, and their rent-rolls, save when the reward of military sack or service, nearly always represent the lucrative use for private emolument of the control of public revenue on a larger or smaller scale, through the exercise or inheritance of feudal agencies of rule, or a share in the more modern agencies of administration. The faith and the patriotism of men, their fears for the next world and their civil necessities in this, have in all ages up to our own been regarded as the legitimate sources of private fortune, by those who allayed the one or supplied the other.

Democratic Conditions

It is only under democratic conditions that men are expected to gain power without losing their poverty, and even the rapid acquirement of wealth by legitimate means during public service, is deemed a cause for scandal and suspicion. To the usual rule of popular institutions that public servants should leave the public service without money and without debts, their stipends permitting not even the honorable acquirement of a competence after years in positions of power and responsibility, Tammany Hall has been not the only exception, but the one most conspicuous, significant, and scandalous. Yet the prodigious and colossal thefts of certain of its leaders have never permanently destroyed the confidence of a plurality of the voters of New York City in its value as a political agency, which, by and large, gave them the kind of city government which they preferred. They have returned to its banners, its ballots, and its candidates whenever an exposure too scandalous to be endured drove them from it, and they never more unhesitatingly adhered to their faith in it under untoward circumstances than in the election, which in November, 1897, surrendered to Tammany the entire government of Greater New York, in whose history and management that of Tammany will, in future, be merged.

Tammany, during its periods of success, is

Real Causes

the strongest and most convincing argument which exists to-day against the extension of the principle of manhood suffrage to the administration of urban affairs. The principle itself is only a form of government, or to speak more accurately, a form of the consent, on which all rule rests. The most arbitrary despotism, in its ultimate analysis, springs from general consent, and the "freest" institutions have no other basis. The issue between the two is, whether this consent shall be exercised by submission, or through the periodical choice of rulers by all the voters of a community. If the admitted evils of Tammany for a century are the normal fruits of the direct rule of a great city by its voters, free institutions are doomed. The ultimate verdict of civilization and of honesty will be against the form of government on which, for over two centuries, as has been confidently believed, rested the hopes of man and the progress of the race. If, however, these evils are not physiological but pathological, if they are not the normal results of conditions either natural or inevitable, but pathological instead, the normal results of abnormal conditions, then the final fruit and result of this great object lesson on the political consciousness and convictions of mankind depends upon whether these abnormal conditions are reparable or irreparable ; due to circumstance or to human nature, the out-

Conditions on Manhattan Island

come of a special environment, or of the general working of the democratic principle.

So momentous are the consequences involved in a solution of the cause and working of Tammany Hall that neither its assailants nor its supporters, and much less those who discuss it from the general standpoint of past politics or present history, have been able with an even temper to contemplate its disastrous operations, for three generations a constant encouragement to those who honestly believe that privilege and the government of the few are necessary to the happiness and security of the many, and a discouragement as perpetual to those whose confidence in the righteousness and worth of the visible recurrent and articulate control of the many, is unshaken even by Tammany Hall. Yet the facts of the case, neither few nor complex, are both accessible and apparent, enacted on a scene more than any other in the world's history, the object of constant unsparing and contemporary record.

The largest city of the Western World is situated on an island whose shape, size, and surroundings deprived it of an homogeneous civic population, while its own growth was a part, and the most conspicuous part, of that great stream of emigration which has transferred 15,000,000 persons, or half the present population of the United Kingdom, during the

Conditions on Manhattan Island

last seventy years, from one side of the Atlantic to the other. Our daily and practical morality is, in large measure, the result of our consciousness of the social conscience of the community of which we are part. Every man who travels is aware, always by observation, and but too often by experience, of the sudden shattering of moral observance which befalls those of training, character, and years, when they suddenly find themselves strangers in a strange city, free from the observation of those who do or may know them. A not dissimilar moral deliquescence is the inevitable result of immigration. If it has furnished more than its proportionate and numerical share of crime, corruption, and imprisonment, the wonder must be that it has not done more.

While in London but a small percentage of the population is of foreign birth, while the rapid growth of foreign cities, whose swift increase during the present century is often cited by the unfriendly critics of our municipal affairs as proof that our urban problems offer no peculiar difficulties, has, with negligible exceptions, drawn its accretion from a surrounding population of the same race, language, and institutions; New York City has been a vast sand-dune, without integral relations, swept across the Atlantic and deposited in the most convenient coign of vantage on the coast of North America. Deprived of all the myriad

Nature of the Immigrants

stay and support to sound political action which comes from coherent and uninterrupted mutual personal acquaintance and tradition, these unrelated units represented, for the most part, that precise stratum of society where generations of relentless toil had ingrained the impression that all social institutions worked together for the advantage of the few. It is, inevitably, those who most bitterly feel this disadvantage in the Old World, who seek the New. This great mass, in its diverse language and with very varied traditions, but alike in a past training of profound distrust for both the honesty and good faith of those who enjoy privileges of education, wealth, and refinement, of direction in business, of supremacy in affairs, or of influence through ability, was certain to find its natural and necessary leaders in the members of that class of the community which, by supplying his first wants, comes into direct personal, and more or less selfish or unselfish contact with the stranger laboring with his hands to seek new fortunes in a new home.

The class to which he turned for direction could not be the employer, for he represented the restraint and the *bourgeois* opportunity from which the immigrant fled, and which he hated in his old home and new. It could not be in religion he would find leaders, for through all its early stage, the great mass of immigrants were of a faith deemed alien by the organized

Reason for Organization

churches of the community to which he came. The small grocer and the liquor-seller, the mechanic foreman or superintendent, and the contractor risen from the ranks of laborers, and for whom he was able to furnish the employment the raw newcomer first seeks, constituted the directing force of society brought most directly in contact with the immigrant and his offspring, new landed or long resident. Coming as strangers and unorganized, the immigrant population fell under the immediate direction of that stratum of society which lay nearest, and which had none of the objectionable features of other strata whose rule was resented, and whose privileges elsewhere were remembered with bitterness. The precise classes which have been described constituted, and still constitute, the backbone of Tammany Hall.

It is a grave error to confound the natural, praiseworthy, and often sound desire of the men of this class of lesser retail dealers, liquor-sellers, and contractors, to be of political influence, and to bear a share in the business of government, with the organized and continuous plunder of some of their higher leaders. To many in the rank and file of Tammany Hall, no pecuniary advantage, but the reverse, has come from their membership. They are in it because, being what they are, and the city what it is, it offers the readiest channel to

The Middle Class

gratify the laudable wish to be of weight and moment in the community in which one lives. Flagrant and flagitious corruption of voters has existed, but corruption only lubricated the machine. It was not its prime motor. The wish and will of a well-organized plurality was this. Tammany has been the agent of this wish. The not infrequent result has been a corruption unexampled under democratic and liberal institutions, though easily matched among despotisms to whose types, methods, and institutions, Tammany of late constantly tends to revert.

These influences would not have become paramount and predominant on Manhattan Island, if it had contained a city normally constituted as to its population, or normally housed as to its dwellings. For the first half-century, New York was such a city, and Tammany Hall, while powerful, was not despotic. But between 1840 and 1870, a large portion of the middle class of New York was siphoned off by insular conditions of territory into Brooklyn, which has often had its boss, always its political independence, and never a Tammany Hall. No insignificant share of the same general class was diverted to the suburban settlements of New Jersey and Connecticut. This left New York City without that precise social enclave which might have saved it, and which in all cities and all times is the salva-

Domestic Service

tion of the commonwealth, the class which filled the trainbands of London in the fight with Charles, and the Continental Army in the fight with George. The instant this class was restored by the charter of Greater New York to the constituents of the city, Tammany Hall was seen to be reduced in its relative vote, though on Manhattan Island it retained its usual plurality.[1]

This double circumstance, a population immigrant in fact or by descent, which found its natural leaders in the lower retail ranks of economic distribution and social direction, and an urban community, in which a valuable and necessary constituent had been decanted off of the island by its shape and by the pressure of trade and population, was undoubtedly aggravated by the conditions of American society. Fugitive in all its relations, American life has reduced to its final contractual nexus the relations of domestic service. Where domestic service is personal and continuous, it and the relations which grow up under these conditions, furnish an important agency by which the political opinions of the well-to-do are filtered through all social strata. The American habit of discharging servants in the spring and re-engaging them in the fall, and a domestic habit and attitude which, from faults on both sides, renders this relation still more precarious, completely sundered and separated

Charities in New York

the more fortunate social strata from the less fortunate, in which lie most of the votes of Tammany.

Since those in need were, for the most part, strangers in a strange land, without personal relations, a vicarious charity system developed, under which most New Yorkers commuted the personal service each man and woman owes to those about him in want, into a money payment. While this disbursed the vast sums which render New York City one of the most liberal in its charities the world over, it divorced and deprived these charities of the personal influence which is the just fruit of an honest personal charity which seeks, first, not to relieve the needs of another, but to discharge one's own personal debt and duty to society, and the relief of human want. In the end, also, these charities themselves, in more than one instance, became the scandalous beneficiaries of Tammany Hall, and were harnessed to the car of its organization, so that their work presented itself to a great mass of the poor and struggling as part of a system which, whether it plundered the rich or not, at least relieved the poverty-stricken.

Lastly, there existed the pressure of American life, quite as much a matter of nervous imagination as of actual exertion, and the more serious social fact that a torrid summer drove from the city for a long absence the class which

Foundation of Tammany

was most needed for daily personal influence, women of character, cultivation, and well-to-do surroundings. This summer absence deprived them of the network of myriad contact which insensibly diffuses social ideas. The tenement-house system, due to the limited area of the city, aggravated and exasperated all these conditions by preventing among the great mass of its population those neighborhood relations, and that personal acquaintance which are only possible where each family has its separate home. New York for half a century has been berthed, not housed.

Tammany Hall began in a secret organization, the Tammany Society or Columbian Order, whose membership was drawn from the precise stratum already described. Organized a little over a century ago, the political drift of this Society, and the political organization which grew out of it, was for forty years towards universal suffrage ; for forty years its tumultuous gatherings directed a growing immigrant population, and for nearly thirty, the heads of this body have led a well-organized body of all classes, partly foreign and partly native, for the exclusive object of ruling the city. The earliest of these periods ended with the first elected mayor in 1834.

It saw the destruction of the more or less aristocratic society of the colonial period, and the opening of the Erie Canal, both incidents in

William Mooney

the commercial expansion, which in England led to the Reform Bill, and in this country to universal white male suffrage. The next period ran to the end of the war, and saw New York established as the gate of the West, while here, 1865 to 1870, the centralization of Federal power, with the destruction of slavery, was accomplished, and household suffrage established in England. The third, covering the last thirty years, has been marked by the transformation in all fields of individual into corporate activity and the multiplication of a myriad complex and specialized agencies, through which a population of 73,000,000 nominally carries on its varied business—social, economic, and political—through institutions originally devised for a population of 3,000,000, and still bearing their old names.

The Tammany Society, which on its celebration of the ter-centennial of Columbus's discovery in 1792, became also the Columbian Order, was organized by William Mooney,[2] an upholsterer by trade, and its first celebration, May 12, 1789, on the banks of the Hudson, is usually treated as the beginning of the society, though its original organization took place at the City Hall, and it was itself an imitation of an earlier Philadelphia society. In New York, as elsewhere, the close of the war saw return to power the colonial better class, recruited by those who had led the Revolution.

Number of Votes Cast

Tammany stood for popular resistance to this. New York City had a restricted suffrage based on a property qualification, and the ancient forty-shilling homeholder of the English borough. The population of the city in 1790, was 33,131, and its voters numbered 5,184,[3] of whom half, or 2,661, were of the forty-shilling class, not owning freeholds to the value of £20. Even at this early date, a majority of voters were without a property stake, and less than one-fourth, or 1,209, held over £100 of realty. Of these voters less than one-half came to the polls, though it is a persistent political fiction that in earlier and better days all good citizens, when all citizens were good, both voted and attended the primary.

In 1789, when George Clinton defeated Robert Yates, only 2,760[4] votes were cast, or less than half the vote lists. To-day a vote of 90 per cent. of the registry is the normal proportion, and the registry is nearly this proportion of the vote. Where in 1790, 54 per cent. of the registered voters seek the polls, the proportion now is for the most part over 90 per cent. In addition, on the usual basis, New York in 1790, would have had with its population a vote of about 6,600, so that about 1,500 persons must have been disfranchised. An important work which Tammany has discharged, and one essential to the final success of our institutions, is of breeding the habit of

Tamanend, the Indian Chief

voting. Abroad, in France, for instance, not over half the voters vote. However, it has failed at other points, Tammany has always been faithful to the work of extending the basis of suffrage, so far as white males were concerned, and in drilling them to the habit of voting. There is to-day no voting body of equal size, or approaching its size, which so fully exercises its political right to vote as that on Manhattan Island. The work of ensuring that this vote shall be cast to the best interests of the city remains to be done.

In 1789, government was still in the hands of the few. The inauguration of Washington was a turning-point in more than Federal affairs, and the Tammany Society represented more than one of its events. As the Indian was driven back from the coast, and his character and habits became legendary, there sprang up an innocent admiration for qualities which Cooper was soon to make a part of fiction, and which were never a part of fact. The Middle States, in particular, had been brought into close contact with Indians of a tribe and type less savage and more peaceful than any along the coast. Among the Lenni Lenape Indians, Tamanend, whose grave is still cherished,[8] and whose memory was long revered, was a chief who signed one of Penn's treaties, purchasing part of Philadelphia. He became, during the Revolution, the pseudo pa-

Tribes and Totems

tron saint of the younger officers and men of the line. His day, May 12th, replaced that of St. George. There was also in this aboriginal worship and admiration, relic and reflection of Rousseau's apotheosis of primitive man and the dawn of a protest against English supremacy, always strongest in an American community in the stratum from which Tammany's membership was drawn. In organizing the new society in New York, but one of many, the ritual and organization of an Iroquois lodge was imitated, and the "long room" at Martling's had its name, not from its length, but because this was the term, still familiar, applied by the Indian to his tribal assembly-room. The Tammany Society was, therefore, divided into thirteen tribes,[6] each with its totem, and while the Society itself remained active in its membership and meetings, each initiate was assigned to one of these tribes. Time and tendencies are, however, stronger in determining totems than paper constitutions and rituals. The symbol upon which Tammany and the public have finally settled, with the agreeable unanimity of the captor and his prey, has been the Tammany Tiger, first emblazoned on the engine of "Big Six,"[7] and conspicuous under Tweed in the heavy gold badge of the Americus Club. The year[8] in the ritual of the Society was divided into the four seasons, and their elaborate and artificial return

Other Societies

to the savage still appears after a century in the advertised notices of the meetings of the Society, jostling more modern forms and phrases. These mild fooleries were all only part of a like spirit perpetually out-cropping in our cities in "Sir Knights," in regalia, and in rituals of whose complexion, extent, and important influence on the character of individuals many of those who deem themselves familiar with American society are profoundly ignorant.

Tammany's original political action was along lines suggested by the "Committee of Correspondence," whose revolutionary plots, success has turned into patriotic projects. It formed the usual medium of inter-state political action in the first forty years after the close of the Revolution, and slowly developed into its present system of party government. Similar Tammany societies had been organized in other States. That in Philadelphia, parent of all the rest, was first organized May 1, 1772,[9] when the sons of King Tammany met at the house of James Byrns to celebrate the memory of a chieftain already associated with American opposition to the European spirit. Reorganized in imitation of the New York exemplar, the Tammany Society, or Columbian Order of Philadelphia, at the Columbia Wigwam, on the Schuylkill, showed its opposition May 12,

Creek Indians

1798, to Federalism and its sympathy with the French. It paraded in costume in honor of Jefferson's election, its Wiskinski to the front, carrying a key ; it celebrated, in 1802, the acquisition of Louisiana, always supported the ruling demagogues of a day of demagogues, and its celebrations were still in progress in 1814. In Rhode Island [10] it was not until 1819 that a Tammany Society was organized and continued for five years with various branches and much success to lead the Democratic party to short-lived victory. These societies, wherever organized, displayed everywhere the same revolt of the class newly arrived to the suffrage, or desiring it, and made in all places the same appeal in parade, buck-tail, and ritual.

The original Tammany Society was at first welcomed as an aid to the effort Washington was making at the opening of his Administration to conciliate all classes at home, and receive peace on our Indian frontier. A year after its first organization, when Col. Marinus Willett brought to New York a deputation of Creek Indians, they were the guests of Tammany Society during their visit. The occasion was serious. Our Western march was barred at the north by the British forts and at the south by the Creeks and Cherokees, the most powerful confederacy on our frontier. Their reception and entertainment

French Influence

at the new Federal capital by the Tammany Society, in full costume and regalia, was a public service whose importance it is not easy now to appreciate.

Before three years had passed, the Tammany Society was in full, though unavowed, opposition to Washington's Administration, its first conspicuous sign of changing views being its elaborate celebration[11] of the landing of Columbus, October 12, 1792, whose odes, inscriptions, and ceremonies were devoted to the pledge that:

> Secure for ever and entire
> The Rights of Man shall here remain.—

language which in that day and date was the dialect of the supporter of France and the opponent of the policy of Washington. Two months later the Society met, December 27, 1792, to celebrate the victory of Dumouriez[12]—a meeting whose last midnight and perhaps maudlin toast expressed the fervent hope that the American fair would ever keep their favors for the Republican brave. Nor from that day to this has the elaborate political machinery of Tammany Hall failed to appreciate the necessity of keeping in close union the social pleasures and the political action of great masses of voters. The winter ball and the summer excursion, whose heavy expense is no small part of the annual budget

New Elements in New York 1798

of a district leader to-day, echo the determination of the toast in Brom Martling's Hall a century ago.

The Revolution had been precipitated, as far as physical force was concerned, by "Liberty Boys," led by a few men who represented the secondary colonial aristocracy of wealth, for which Adams stood in Massachusetts, Clinton in New York, and Morris in Pennsylvania. Ten years after the struggle found the officer better rewarded than the private both by Legislatures and the public. Mooney had been a violent "Liberty Boy." He and his found little to admire in the waiting policy of Washington. The turmoil of Europe added immigration to domestic ferment, and the Revolution of '98 sent to New York the ablest Irish immigrants of the century, the last immigration of birth, abroad. With it closed colonial conditions of political emigration. Thenceforward European emigration was economic. New York's trade was gaining what Philadelphia lost by yellow fever. The Tammany Society became the nucleus about which centred the unsatisfied turbulence of the Revolution, the rapidly increasing ranks of labor deprived of a vote, and the new wave of immigration stung to bitter revolt against Federalism by the Alien and Sedition laws of 1798. The immediate local leader was Daniel D. Tompkins, a young

graduate of Columbia, who began his political career by marrying the daughter of the Alderman of his ward, and, having married her, demonstrated his right to become a district leader by carrying his ward, the Seventh, and reversing, in 1800, the Federal majority of 200 in the year before. He ended his typical Tammany career under charges of pecuniary dishonesty. His integrity was in the end vindicated, but only at the expense of his administrative ability.[13]

Men without Votes

For ten years, after George Clinton, in 1789, by a narrow majority of 429, defeated Robert Yates, the candidate of a conservative reaction, the rapid development of politics went on. The population doubled. The voters increased but two thirds; in 1801, 8,088. The men without a vote trebled. Dangers environ a democratic community when population outstrips voters. The halves of the city pulled apart. Realty owners over $500 in value doubled. Men owning $100 to $500 nearly disappeared. The landless 40-shilling householder more than doubled. The landless voteless men trebled. Tammany steadily gravitated from social to political action. It denounced Jay's treaty, and the distinguished author of the Louisiana code began his public career by flinging the missile which cut open the face of Hamilton. It went in a body to help fortify Governor's Island when

Tammany Meetings

war with England looked near. It welcomed Priestley, but his New York friends did not, as in Philadelphia, attend his sermons. Its reception to the discoverer of oxygen was the last sign of the scientific interest which, in 1790, led to an American Historical Museum, first opened in the City Hall, and removed later by Gardiner Baker, its founder and curator, to the open triangular space where Broad and Pearl join. Three weeks after its reception to the fugitive from the mob of Birmingham, the society surrendered to the curator its museum on condition that it should bear its name, and that its members should enjoy a family free ticket, an early application of the principle of free passes which has distinguished the Society for a century.

Meeting, as most of the societies of the day did, in a tavern, Tammany began at Borden's in lower Broadway, and its annual procession on May 12th, "St. Tammany," and July 4th, for the "long talks" and "short talks" of its celebration, marched up Broadway with feathers and leggins to the old Presbyterian Church on Wall Street, or to the Brick Church which faced City Hall Square, on the triangle at whose apex is the New York *Times* building. In 1798, it moved to Martling's, on the southeast corner of Nassau and Spruce Streets.

This long, low building, opening on Nassau, was kept by "Brom" Martling (Abraham B.

The First Building 1811

Martling), and for twenty years, even after a new hall was built, the members of the Society, and the political party which clustered about it, were known as "Martling men." The use of Tammany as a political term did not begin in 1818, but until that date was infrequent. It became common, not because the Tammany Society itself grew more immediate in its political action, but because it had built the first of its permanent homes. Incorporated in 1805, during the next ten years Tammany Hall men held the most lucrative posts in a Federal administration far more extravagant in the emoluments of its offices than in the present day, when salaries have replaced fees. The city itself was passing through a period of rapid commercial expansion, whose first check was the embargo, which Tammany supported, with the result, as a fruit of the policy of which the embargo was a part, that the relative growth of the city was less than one half as rapid in the second decade of the century as in the first. In 1811, at the end of the first decade, Colonel Rutgers was able to raise $28,000, a large sum, but no more than a single Tammany Federal officer had drawn in a year as fees, and "Martling's Long Room" was replaced, not far from its site, by the first Tammany Hall, at the corner of Frankfort Street and Park Row. The walls of the building then erected still

Funeral Honors

stand, the office of the New York *Sun*. It held originally a hall and hotel, where board was $7 a week, the second leading hotel of the city. It had behind it the shipyards and tanneries on the East River. It had before it the City Hall. The better residence quarter was passing up the island, along another channel in whose currents Tammany Hall has never found the stream to grind its mill.

"Martling's Long Room" had been the resort of "Sons of Liberty" and of the "Sons of 1776." The close connection was one of the causes which made it natural for Tammany Society to give funeral honors to the bones of the Revolutionary prisoners of war, of whom 11,500 had sickened and died in British prison-hulks, treated with no more and no less inhumanity than was the brutal custom of the day. Congress had neglected, in 1803, the memorial of the Society. In 1807, Tammany appointed a committee, and a year later, May 26, 1808, Tammany Society in its regalia, the buck-tail conspicuous, led a civic procession which buried the bleached bones, and returned to the weather-beaten, unpainted structure which had survived the Revolution. Its bar-room was on Spruce, its kitchen on Nassau. Its "long room" ran parallel with the latter. Built when a mere road ran before it up the island, the street had risen in grade. The floor of the hall was reached by two

The First Victory

or three descending steps. Uncouth, dirty, stained, the merest shanty, it was known by Federalist opponents as "the pig-pen." It deserved the name. Its selection, and Borden's, the churches in which the Society held its larger and more decorous meetings, Campbell's in Greenwich village, where its May and summer outings were held, all bespoke the small merchant, retailer, and mechanic, out of whose ranks the Tammany machine was to grow and to control the vast foreign vote of the future.

The Federal party lost its power and its head together, and drove the immigrant into Democratic support by passing the Alien and Sedition laws. In spite of this it won the Congressional election of 1798, and the scandal attending Burr's Manhattan Bank charter gave the Federalists the city by 900 majority in 1799. Sinking step by step, from Washington to Clinton, and from Clinton to Tammany, he came to New York, organized the landless vote, which could not elect a Governor but could determine the choice of Federal electors, and the spring election of 1800 saw the first New York contest in which voters were enrolled, canvassed, and voted with ordered precision. "Faggot"-voters were created by uniting a number of men in the ownership of the same property, poor men were deeded free-holds, the Society kept open

Beginnings of Political History

house in its hall, voters were carried to the poll, the last man was voted, and the first victory of Tammany Hall was won.

Jefferson was elected President and Tammany was placed in the relative position which it has ever since occupied. In New York City it had opposed to it, the well-to-do, the better-educated, and the mass of property-holders. In the State, the State Administration and the vote of the State was in general marshalled in the opposing party. The instant its leader, Aaron Burr, appeared in Washington, where he had been nominated for Vice-President, and began to act for himself in national affairs, Tammany broke with him and united with his enemies, as Tammany has dealt ever since with every political leader in New York State of its own party who with or without its votes, rose to a national position and began a national career. Lastly, without backing in the Northern States, except in the Tammany societies of the larger cities, the new organization found its natural allies in the Southern slave States, and received first from Jefferson and later from Madison and Monroe the aid of Federal patronage, which, as Governor DeWitt Clinton charged twenty years later, was "an organized and disciplined corps in our elections."[14]

The political history of Tammany Hall began with this victory. The Society and its

DeWitt Clinton 1812-1818

committee of correspondence gave a nucleus for political action, secrecy, and contact with other States. The "general meeting" gathered voters for assemblies which ratified nominations and passed resolutions already decided in the Society. Federal offices gave patronage and the Albany Legislature a long series of corrupt transactions in which nearly all public men shared. When Burr, in 1804, was nominated for Governor, Tammany Hall, following Jefferson's wishes and its own inclination, supported Morgan Lewis. He was nominated at a Legislative caucus, whose chairman, Ebenezer Purdy, was later expelled from the Senate for corrupt practices; and whose clerk, Solomon Southwick, was later charged with bribery in procuring the charter of the Bank of America.[15] DeWitt Clinton, the municipal rival of Burr, resigned his seat in the United States Senate to become Mayor, a post with four times the salary of the Federal position and proportionately greater power, the first instance, frequent through the century, of a Tammany man preferring the better-filled manger of its service to the higher but emptier stall of a national career. As with all its Mayors, Tammany early gave him the alternatives of submission, retirement, or the organization of his own political machine. Men like Clinton, Wood, and Grace have done the last. Men like Hone and Hewitt, the second.

Elections

Other more recent Tammany Mayors have selected the first.

The precise difference in Clinton's case had as its occasion, not its cause, his sentence of Gulian C. Verplanck for his share in the riot which marked public disapproval of the Federalist sympathies of the Columbia College authorities. Separating himself from the system which placed in a caucus of Congressmen at Washington the nomination of President, De Witt Clinton began the modern national convention, and organized the alliance between the interior of New York and the Federal Whig and Republican vote of the city which opposition to Tammany has marshalled through the century on all State and National issues. Tammany had developed from its own ranks, Tompkins, its leader in this struggle ; he had the support of Ambrose Spencer and other Federal office-holders under him. Tammany Hall vigorously supported the war of 1812, a most important public service. It aided in opposing Federal aid to the Canals, which were, under De Witt Clinton, at length built after political victories, due to his city machine, which organized a lower level than Tammany, as Wood and Morrissey did later, and the interior rural vote, first Tompkins's and later his. Through all, Tammany steadily held its grip on the city. In 1818, its entire ticket for Congress and its corporation officers were chosen by

Dissensions and Changes

1,200 majority.[16] In 1819, its average majority on Assemblymen was 2,301 and on Senators, elected by a limited suffrage, 850.[17] One year later, the "Tammanies," thanks to various coalitions in the State, had 41 Assemblymen, the Federals 39, and the Clintonian Republicans 46. These dissensions in Democracy, Niles lamented, as Democratic editors did like divisions due to like causes seventy and eighty years later.[18] From year to year, through this period, the Tammany Society and the General Meeting issued addresses to the branches of the one, and the Democratic-Republican fellow-citizens of the other, deploring in 1817 the spread of the "foreign" game of billiards among the upper, and vice among the lower; and in 1819[19] its address led Adams, who with Jefferson and Madison responded to its utterances, to wish it success "in discountenancing all pernicious customs and usages, and deviation from a wise and virtuous national economy." Through all its first period, Tammany spoke with the accent of a middle-class precisian. In the next period, it sank to the street-rough. In the close of the third, grew up the intimate connection of some, not all, of its leaders, with the semi-criminal classes. But this affected only a part. The great mass of the active membership of Tammany Hall as a political organization has always consisted of the civic stratum made up of daily labor with

Transition Period 1821–1830

its immediate direction in the stratum just above.

A Tammany "general meeting" began the movement which ended in the constitution of 1821 and white male suffrage. This somewhat increased the number of voters, but not much. Under a restricted suffrage, the ingenuity of politicians manufactured a registry of 19,925 voters in New York City in 1821, where the census in 1826 could count only 18,283 adult male citizens. The real change was an increase in the habit of voting. In 1826, only 31.12 per cent. of the voters voted; in 1828, 75.69; and by 1840, 91.96 per cent.—the modern average. Nor had naturalization added much to the vote. Even in 1840, the New York Assembly had in it but one person of foreign birth[20] and 75 were native to the State. In 1855, New York City still had 46,173 native and 42,704 naturalized voters; in 1855, 51,500 native and 77,475 naturalized; in 1875, 90,973 native and 141,179 naturalized. This eloquent proportion remains the rule. Yet the earlier American municipality was a filthy, pestilential city, enduring countless nuisances, with a general death-rate comparable to the tenement-house districts of seventy years later.

Tammany shared with the rest our transition period, 1820–1830, Buck-tails casting in their lot with Van Buren's Jackson men, and Clintonians developing into anti-Masons—

Alternation of Votes

spurred by the wide influence of secret societies like Tammany—and Whigs. For a few years, an election of mayor by the aldermen put Tammany at a disadvantage, as the Whigs held the less populous wards, and the successive ballotings were full of shameless scandal. When a constitutional amendment, 1833, made the mayoralty elective, Cornelius A. Lawrence was nominated, 1834, after old forms. Posters announced the "general meeting." A flag was hoisted over Tammany Hall. The hall was open to all comers. He polled 17,575 votes, and his Whig opponent, Gulian C. Verplanck, 17,373. Since then the tides of votes have ebbed and flowed with a periodical regularity.[21] Tammany held five successive terms and the opposition two; the organization elected five mayors and the opposition one; Tammany two and the opposition one; Tammany one and the opposition two; Tammany three and the opposition four; Tammany four and the opposition one; Tammany two and the opposition one; two candidates endorsed by Tammany and the opposition one; a compromise candidate and Tammany three; the opposition one, and Tammany the last. This steady alternation has given Tammany about two thirds of the mayors, and its periods of defeat and victory have only been broken (during the war) by Fernando Wood and the Mozart Hall Democracy.

Changes 1835-1838

Tammany Hall, in full communion with Jackson, was already in fatal alliance with Southerners, who figured as prominently as its speech-makers then as now.[22] In 1831, the Hall made the serious blunder of trying to support Jackson and to sympathize with South Carolina in the same resolutions. New York was roused, and a great meeting of merchants passed an uncompromising resolution. The blunder severed a reputable vote never regained. The Equal Rights, or, as we should say, labor party, in 1829 cut off another body of voters. Growing, the new labor party in October, 1835, started from its Bowery headquarters[23] and stormed the "general meeting" in a riot which gave birth to the "loco-foco" party, which owes its name to the matches used when the Tammany janitor turned off the gas. In 1837, after two Tammany victories, the split cost the mayoralty,—Aaron Clark, Whig, 17,044; John D. Morgan, Democrat, 13,763; and Moses Jaques, bolter, 4,239. Again, in 1838, Tammany was defeated, borne down by the scandal of wholesale defalcations, Samuel Swartwout, Collector, for $1,200,000, and William M. Price, District Attorney, for $75,000. Both fled, and neither was pursued. The public conscience was inconceivably low. "Defalcations are no crime," said a leading New York paper[24] in a cynical vein. For five years, for the pendulum swung

Growing Supremacy

back in 1839, Isaac L. Varian winning by a narrow majority, Tammany Hall elected its mayor by a constantly increasing plurality and an enlarging poll, which, in 1844, prompted charges of fraud from Whigs who found, as often since, that Tammany won as well without Federal and State patronage as with. Twice, 1844 and 1845, the American party elected its candidate, James Harper, but disappeared as rapidly as it had arisen, and, in 1846, Tammany elected W. F. Havemeyer by the crushing majority of 6,822.

The victory was decisive. The city was passing out of its provincial stage. A police force was about to be organized. The water works were completed. The internal trade and foreign commerce of the city were about to enter on the amazing expansion which culminated in 1857. The adoption of a new constitution and its re-apportionment gave the Democrats an advantage retained for thirty years. Immigration was transforming the city. When the Mayor first became elective, American workmen and Whig majorities held the first to the fifth wards in the lower end of the Island and went up the ridge with the eighth and fifteenth wards. The new foreign element had settled in the low ground of the sixth, and the seventh and ninth to fourteenth were Tammany. Fifteen years later, the lower end of the Island was Irish and Democratic,

Growing Supremacy 1850–1853

and the American Whig mechanic was elbowed north and west, coloring the seventh, ninth, and thirteenth wards, long Whig and later Republican.

If Tammany lost two or three elections, 1847, 1849, in part because its vigorous support of the Mexican War was unpopular, its supremacy was growing, and in 1850, Fernando Wood, the first man who attempted to be boss in Tammany Hall after fifty years of joint leadership, organized the brute vote which radiated from the "bloody Sixth." Beaten for the first two-year term by Ambrose C. Kingsland, Whig, who polled the Free Soil Democratic vote, predecessors of the "State Democracy," two years later, 1852–1856, Wood was laid aside for Jacob A. Westervelt, who was pulled through by the Presidency and Seymour, in 1852, with 10,000 majority. In 1853, the Democratic party split into "Softs" and "Hards." Slavery is the cause usually assigned.[1] The real one was that the "Hards," the reputable office-holders, were vainly trying to hold power against the rising tide of rowdy "plug-ugly" and bruiser led by Wood and organized in "clubs," "gangs," and fire engine companies, and all the manifold machinery by which an ignorant foreign vote and a depraved native vote as ignorant, was manned, managed, manipulated, and made ready to share and dare the plunder of the city ten years later under

Closed Doors 1857

Tweed. Winning the regular Tammany nomination in 1854, Wood was elected over a divided vote, polling but 20,033 out of 56,-972 votes cast. With his term began the reversion to earlier methods in the attempt to govern New York from Albany through a non-partisan police. It failed, and only gave a new demonstration that Tammany's power is independent of mere patronage. Enjoying boss control of party machinery, Wood, in 1856, polled ninety-nine votes against ten for all other candidates in the regular Tammany convention.[25] A most reputable bolting convention nominated James C. Libby. He polled scarcely 5,000 votes and Wood 34,566, a plurality of 9,384 over his next antagonist, Isaac O. Baker, the Know-nothing candidate. In the regular course, Wood would have become and remained the first boss of Tammany Hall. His respectable opponents had control, however, of the Tammany Society. A hot canvass, in 1857, ended in the selection of a Board of Sachems, who, by a vote of seven to six, closed the doors on Wood and his General Committee. For the first time, the Tammany Society, which is only the landlord of the political body which leases its hall, exercised its singular power of deciding between rival organizations. Again in 1872, it closed its doors. During the last illness of John Kelly, it was deemed possible that it might be

The Close of the War

called upon again to decide between rival claimants.

Driven from Tammany Hall, Wood found the city alarmed and aroused, and, in 1857, he was defeated by Daniel F. Tiemann, a Democratic candidate who gathered to his support all dissentient elements, the first instance in the history of the city. Organizing Mozart Hall, in 1859, Wood defeated divided opponents and was elected Mayor a third time in a canvass in which the Democratic vote was evenly divided. The war now broke the continuity of local traditions. Tammany Hall organized a regiment, the 42d New York, and sent it to the front, and its monument, with its Indian wigwam and Indian chief, was dedicated at Gettysburg, September 24, 1891.[26] Of the steady service of the regiment, its record in thirty-six battles and engagements is a sufficient proof. The war period saw George Opdyke, the only Mayor New York has ever had elected on a Republican ticket, chosen by 613 votes over two Democratic candidates, Wood and Gunther. Two years later a brief-lived "Hall," led by John McKeon, elected C. Godfrey Gunther over a combined Tammany and Mozart Hall candidate by 6,524 votes.

The close of the war found Tammany Hall, whose local ranks were bitterly disloyal, divided, defeated, and discredited. If it promptly

Reorganization

rose to supreme civic power and decided the national Democratic nomination in 1868, it was because it represented certain stable social conditions and a permanent political force. New York was now a city, and no accretion of population or territory has altered its character. Its great population was, and for forty years and more was destined to remain, with a majority of foreign birth. With this majority was associated another great stratum, descendants of the Irish immigration of twenty years before. The two were crowded together in a great tract of dense population, the needs of whose days and the amusements of whose nights were furnished by the grocer, the retailer, and the liquor-seller, while the associations best known and most familiar were those of the volunteer fire company, the beer garden, and the "club" dance-house. Reorganized with district leaders drawn from these sources, Tammany Hall was led by Tweed in the riotous assault of its chiefs on the city treasury, while the rank and file believed themselves on the high road to regain the Democratic supremacy enjoyed before the war. After the fall of Tweed, crushed by the revelation of his wholesale plunder—though if he had gone to England instead of to jail he might have returned to power—Tammany was again reorganized by John Kelly, a man of a different type, sober, patient, industrious,

The Rulers of Tammany

and of such honesty as was possible for a man bred in his surroundings. Of the three bosses of Tammany Hall, I once reported the sentence of the first for his embezzlements, and the trial of the third for murder; the second once said to me, when, in a moment of youthful enthusiasm, I urged on him the demerits of a local candidate for district judge, "If I go into these local fights, I can't pick good men for the Supreme Court, which is my business." To this business, he devoted himself for ten years of patient and stubborn assiduity, accepting the evils he found and increasing them by consolidating the power of the organization he led—in some sort its Augustus. He found it a horde. He left it a political army. In 1871, by bolting the nomination of Lucius Robinson, he detached this army from all allegiance but that of Tammany Hall. This supreme stroke of statecraft completed the slow development of a century by rendering the boss of Tammany a supreme ruler within his political limits. Twice he elected his mayors, Wickham, 1874, and Ely, 1876; once he was defeated, Schell by Cooper, 1878, and twice he accepted a coalition Democrat, Grace, 1880, and Edson, 1882, but he ended with the election, 1884, of Grant, a straight Tammany candidate. After his death, John Kelly was succeeded by Richard Croker, a man whose reign is still too incomplete to admit of com-

The "General Meeting"

plete analysis. An investigation in 1894 showed, however, that the early and direct plunder of Tweed had been replaced in the city government of New York by indirect pillage through blackmail, whose responsibility Tammany shares with other political organizations, but in which its portion was larger, its methods more systematic, and its evil success more complete.

The political army which has raised these three bosses to despotic rule, and won this extraordinary succession of political victories through a century, has slowly reached its present organization under which a single man exercises unchallenged supremacy. When New York had 5,000 voters, a single hall enabled a majority of the majority of these voters to meet and decide the nominations and the general policy of the party. This "general meeting" is, by two channels of succession, the lineal predecessor of the General Committee which now crowds Tammany Hall, able to accommodate only a third of the body which is supposed to meet there. During the first thirty years of Tammany, the "general meeting" had two functions; it directly made nominations and issued addresses, which later became platforms. This use of the "general meeting" survives in the direct use of the "general committee" as a county convention to nominate county officers

The Ward Meetings

without calling primaries or electing delegates for the purpose. The "general committee" is to-day, however, the symbol rather than the survival of the "general meeting," which was once the ultimate authority in Tammany Hall.

At the "general meetings" committees were appointed to prepare addresses and to carry on the campaign. These also acted as "committees of correspondence," following Revolutionary precedent, an atrophied organ still surviving in the "Committee on Correspondence." [27] Each ward, at an early day, had its ward committee, appointed at a general meeting of the ward. The same machinery existed in Congressional and legislative districts when these were created. There is a curious political myth that at some early period the general body of voters attended their meetings and made them the direct utterance of popular will as apart from that of politicians directly interested in office-holding and the profits of place and influence. For this legend there is absolutely no evidence whatever. When Tammany Hall, at its primaries in September, 1897, polled 35,000 votes,[28] a larger vote was cast than had ever been before recorded, and there is every reason to believe that it was also a larger proportion of the vote cast in New York City for Tammany candidates at the last election. These "general meetings" and pri-

Civic Organizations

maries began in the grossest disorder. Clinton's meetings, which drew from a social stratum lower than that of Tammany Hall, were regularly mobbed. The ward meetings from 1820 to 1840 were the constant scene of boisterous and violent combat. From 1840 to 1870 they were normally in the hands of the bully, the black-leg, and the prize-fighter. Tamed by a police, efficient, with all its blackmail, in preserving external order, they have been for the past quarter-century incomparably more orderly, no more corrupt, and no less illusive expressions of the popular will than in the past.

Until the passage of the "Cassidy resolution,"[29] in the State Convention of 1871, the ward and its election district were the units of political representation. By 1822, the ephemeral "general committee," most of whose members were also members of the Tammany Society, and sometimes acted through it, were consolidated in a permanent "general council" of three members from each of the eleven wards, into which (1825) the city was divided. New wards increased the membership to forty-five, and in 1836 to seventy-five. There was here for nearly twenty years a ward general committee, a "general meeting" which tumultuously acted for the party, and a network of local ward and district committees. These last often filled

Civic Organizations

ten to twelve columns in the daily papers, and were, like the Tammany General Committee of to-day, a tolerably complete roster of the office-holding class and the working army of Tammany Hall.

Between the disappearance of this organization in fact, though not in name, and the appearance of current conditions, political power between 1845 to 1865 passed to the many voluntary civic organizations of which the fire companies were so easily chief. Some social, some useful, and some purely predatory, these varied bodies first controlled Tammany Hall, and, when they were turned out of it, for ten years made the fortunes of various "Halls," more permanent. The most important were drafted into the service of the city in a paid fire department, and the rest were subdued by the police.

They became in this condition accessions to a political organization which controlled the police. When John Kelly undertook the work of reorganizing Tammany, the Assembly District and Election District were the units of organization, the latter giving a member each for the General Committee and the former supplying the Assembly District leader, who sat on the old "Committee of Organization." This useful and powerful body was employed by John Kelly "to discipline" John Morrissey, and was for nearly ten years the centre of the

Election Districts

organization. It began by choosing its ruler. It ended, as is the fashion of despotism, by its ruler choosing it. It remained the ruling body in December, 1885, when Croker controlled seventeen out of twenty-four members and assured his succession in the organization.

The election district, which with its single member furnished a sufficiently large base in the city of about a million with 160,000 voters in 1875, had become an unsuitable unit twenty years later, when both the city and the voters had nearly doubled in number. The Democratic vote was made a basis of representation in the General Committee for each Assembly District on the ratio of a vote—not member—to each fifty votes cast. The delegation thus determined was "elected" in a nominal poll, until 1895 open only two hours, at a single place in each Assembly District. The delegation has, necessarily, one from each election district and as many more as choose to serve and pay a fee. This procedure has swollen the General Committee from 700 or 800 in 1874; to 4,562 in 1890; to 8,000 in 1892; and to upwards of 12,000 now. Its committees are correspondingly enlarged, the committee on organization having in 1892, 768 members or 32 from each Assembly District.

Real power and control rested with the "leader" in each Assembly District, named

Assembly District

by the "boss," but holding his place by the feudal tenure of constant and unbroken victory. In December, 1893, a running mate for the leader in the shape of a business man was devised. Each "leader" knows the citizens, families, homes, and business of an Assembly District, containing from 5,000 to 14,000 voters, and keeps an amazing knowledge of their votes, habits, needs, desires, pursuits, pleasures, and crimes. Each election district with its 300 to 500 voters has its leader. This organization is customarily supposed to be devoted to marshalling, managing, and polling the vote. But this is only the culmination of its arduous duties. It forms a vast net-work through which a host of daily and necessary civic duties are discharged. Through it, foreign voters are naturalized and trained to new duties, employment is procured for the idle, aid distributed to the needy, the unfortunate are befriended in hospital and court-room, the semi-criminal receive immunity, the honest are guided and aided to those extra-legal advantages a policeman conveniently blind can give to the peddler, the vendor, huckster, and small store-keeper; and there is furnished, besides, the centre of an active social and political life. A part of these duties involve breach of the law and lead to thinly disguised blackmail. Most are part of that mutual civic help, busy men, however public-

Civic Duties

spirited, utterly neglect. Done for selfish motives doubtless by the district "leader," they are none the less necessary.

Their discharge renders the Tammany organization a daily fountain of benefits to the ignorant and helpless, whose votes, won by these dubious means, are made the bulwark of daily wrongs public and private. This union of crime, oppression, and benevolence, of malfeasance, blackmail, and largess, has held its power for a century, neither by corruption nor by patronage, but by its hideous imitation and wise use of important civil duties, neglected by the well-to-do. Their sedulous and righteous discharge will supplant Tammany by supplying something better. No other method, machinery, or management will, for no form of government, however free, no law, however wise, and no political machinery, however adroit, can ever be a substitute for civic courage, civic virtue, and the daily discharge of mutual civic duties. If these duties are neglected by good men, bad men will use them to evil ends.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES.

Notes and References

1. In 1897, the vote of the Tammany candidate for Mayor was in New York City (Manhattan and Bronx), 16,607 less than the united vote of its opponents, and in Greater New York (whose total vote was only 75 per cent. greater than that of New York) its own total vote fell 51,562 short of the total of its opponents, or nearly fourfold its New York minority.
2. The first officers were William Mooney, White Matlock, Oliver Glenn, Philip Hone, James Tyler, John Campbell, Gabriel Furman, John Burger, Jonathan Pierce.
3. *New York State Census*, 1855, p. ix.
4. Hammond's *Political History of New York*, i., 41.
5. Grave of Tamanend. H. C. Mercer, *Magazine of American History*, March, 1893.
6. New York was the Eagle tribe; Delaware, Tiger; Virginia, Wolf; North Carolina, Buffalo; Pennsylvania, Bee; Connecticut, Beaver; New Hampshire, Squirrel; Maryland, Fox; New Jersey, Tortoise; Rhode Island, Eel; South Carolina, Dog.
7. "Big Six" was the term applied to Engine Company No. 6, in the Sixth Ward, the foreman of whose big "double-decker" was William M. Tweed.
8. The year was divided into the seasons of Snows, Blossoms, Fruits, and Hunting.
9. Scharf-Westcott's *History of Philadelphia*, i., 265.
10. Marcus W. Jerregan, *Tammany Societies of Rhode Island.*
11. Edward F. Delancy, *New York Historical Society*, Oct. 4, 1894.
12. *American Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 3, 1793.
13. In 1806, Tompkins was elected Governor of New York, and in 1816, Vice-President of the United States.

Notes and References

14. *Niles Register*, N. S., vii., 208.
15. Hugh J. Hastings's *Ancient American Politics*, p. 28.
16. *Niles Register*, xii., 192.
17. *Niles Register*, N. S., ii., 192.
18. *Niles Register*, N. S., ix., 354.
19. *Niles Register*, N. S., v., 387.
20. Hazard's *United States Register*, ii., 140.
21. Thomas E. V. Smith, "Elections of New York." *New York Historical Society*, 1893.
22. *Niles Register*, 4th S., vii., 295.
23. *Niles Register*, 4th S., xiii., 163.
24. *New York Herald*, Dec. 10, 1838.
25. *The Tammany Hall Democracy*, 1875, p. 38.
26. *Tammany Hall Souvenir*, 1893, p. 71.
27. *By-Laws General Committee of Tammany Hall*, viii., 2, 1893.
28. *New York Sun*, Sept. 25, 1897.
29. This resolution required the New York Democracy to elect delegates by assembly districts.

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